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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 007339

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARN, NEA/PA, NEA/AIA, INR/NESA, R/MR,
I/GNEA, B/BXN, B/BRN, NEA/PPD, NEA/IPA FOR ALTERMAN
USAID/ANE/MEA
LONDON FOR GOLDRICH
PARIS FOR O'FRIEL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR JO](#)

SUBJECT: AMMAN, MEDIA REACTION ON REACTIONS TO THE
PRESIDENT'S SPEECH, RIYADH BOMBINGS

SUMMARY

TWO MAIN THEMES DOMINATED THE JORDANIAN MEDIA BETWEEN
FRIDAY 7 AND MONDAY 10: THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH
CALLING FOR DEMOCRATIC REFORMS, AND THE RIYADH
BOMBINGS.

REACTIONS TO THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH REFLECTED THE
FOLLOWING POINTS:

MISTRUST IN THE PRESIDENT'S SINCERITY IN WANTING
DEMOCRACY IN ARAB COUNTRIES
DISMISSIVENESS OF HIS PRAISE FOR JORDAN, AND WARNINGS
TO THE JORDANIAN LEADERSHIP TO REMEMBER THE FATE OF
OTHER CAPITALS IN THE REGION THAT BANKED ON THEIR
STRATEGIC ALLIANCE WITH WASHINGTON.
CRITICISM FOR FAILING TO "MAKE A SINGLE REFERENCE TO
SHARON'S CRIMES IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES."
REGARDING THE BOMBINGS IN SAUDI ARABIA, COMMENTATORS
WERE ROUNDLY CRITICAL OF THE ATTACK ON CIVILIANS, TO
THE POINT WHERE THEY COMPARED THE PERPETRATORS TO
ARIEL SHARON.

BELOW ARE SAMPLE COMMENTARIES:

-- ATTACKING RIYADH USING SHARON'S METHODS
INFLUENTIAL DAILY COLUMNIST MAHMOUD AL-RIMAWI WROTE IN
SEMI-OFFICIAL INFLUENTIAL ARABIC DAILY AL-RAI ON
NOVEMBER 10: "IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN RIGHTLY SAID THAT
EXTREMISTS ARE ALLIES, EVEN IF THEIR AIMS ARE
DIFFERENT. THE HORRIFYING EVENTS IN RIYADH COME AS AN
ECHO TO THE SUPPORTS THAT THE NEO-CONSERVATIVES IN
WASHINGTON GIVE TO ISRAELI BARBARISM. IN BOTH CASES
CIVILIANS ARE ATTACKED, IN THE NAME OF RELIGION AND IN
THE NAME OF SPREADING DEMOCRACY. EITHER WAY THE ACTS
ARE GUIDED BY BLIND FANATICISM AND LACK OF RESPECT FOR
HUMAN LIFE, EVEN THOUGH SHARON IS MORE BLATANT IN
IMPLEMENTING HIS POLICY OF ETHNIC CLEANSING WITH TOTAL
AMERICAN SUPPORT, WHICH THE U.S. GIVES WITHOUT SHAME."

-- BUSH THE PREACHER
TAHER AL-ADWAN, CHIEF EDITOR OF INDEPENDENT, MASS-
APPEAL ARABIC DAILY AL-ARAB AL-YAWM WROTE ON SATURDAY
8: "BUSH'S PRAISE OF DEMOCRACY IN JORDAN MEANS
NOTHING, BECAUSE IT ONLY PUTS US IN THE COMPANY OF A
NUMBER OF STATES WHOM HE PRAISED, EVEN THOUGH
DEMOCRATIC REFORMS IN THEM HAVE YET TO START. THIS
PRAISE CANNOT COVER THE TRUTH OF WHAT IS HAPPENING IN
IRAQ, SUCH AS THE DESTRUCTION THE ARRESTS, AND THE
TERRORIZATION OF FAMILIES IN THEIR BEDROOMS.
DEMOCRACY BASED ON THE MODEL OF THE U.S. IN IRAQ OR
ZIONISM IN PALESTINE IS NOTHING BUT CORRUPT GOODS THAT
WILL NOT FIND ANY TAKERS. IN FACT IT IS AN INSULT TO
EVERY ARAB."

-- BUSH'S SPEECH ON DEMOCRACY
PROMINENT DAILY COMMENTATOR FAHED AL-FANEK WROTE IN
SEMI-OFFICIAL INFLUENTIAL ARABIC DAILY AL-RAI ON
NOVEMBER 9: "BUSH'S SPEECH OUTLINES A POLITICAL
PROGRAM, AND THE FACT THAT HE PUTS SYRIA IN THE SAME
CATEGORY AS PRE-WAR IRAQ IS NOT COMFORTING. BUT THE
QUESTION IS, DOES THE U.S. MEAN WHAT IT SAYS, OR IS
THIS A MEANS OF APPLYING -PRESSURE ON ARAB RULERS TO
COLLABORATE FURTHER WITH THE OCCUPATION AGAINST THE
WISHES OF THEIR PEOPLES? THE U.S. KNOWS WELL THAT
THESE COUNTRIES WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SUPPORT IT
IN ITS OCCUPATION OF IRAQ HAD THEY BEEN DEMOCRATIC."

-- JORDAN IN THE REVISIONIST SPEECH
LEADING COMMENTATOR URAIB AL-RANTAWI WROTE IN CENTER-
LEFT, INFLUENTIAL ARABIC DAILY AL-DUSTOUR ON NOVEMBER
9: "I CANNOT IMAGINE WHY BUSH REFERRED TO JORDAN'S
RECENT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS AS HISTORIC. IF THEY
PRODUCED RESULTS THAT THE U.S. SEES AS HISTORIC, HOW
COME WE DO NOT SEE THAT? . NO ONE SHOULD BE COMFORTED
BY BUSH'S PRAISE, PARTLY BECAUSE WE STILL NEED
POLITICAL REFORMS. FOR INSTANCE, THE U.S. SHOULD
RESPECT US MORE IF WE WERE TO ALLOW PEOPLE TO

DEMONSTRATE DENOUNCING U.S. POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST
THAN IF WE WERE TO REPRESS THE PEOPLE AND PREVENT
THEIR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION. MOREOVER, THIS
TRANSITIONAL SATISFACTION WITH JORDAN WILL NEVER BE
PERMANENT, AND WE CAN LEARN THE LESSON FROM THE
'STRATEGIC ALLIANCES' THAT MANY CAPITALS IN THE REGION
HAD WITH WASHINGTON, AND WHAT HAS BECOME OF THESE
ALLIANCES."

-- CREDIBILITY THAT IS COLLAPSING ON HOT SAND
LIBERAL DAILY COLUMNIST JAMIL AL-NIMRI WROTE IN
INDEPENDENT, MASS-APPEAL ARABIC DAILY AL-ARAB AL-YAWM
ON SUNDAY 9: "WHAT CREDIBILITY DOES BUSH HAVE WHEN HE
PURSUES AN INSANE POLICY THAT SURPRISES ALL OBSERVERS,
AND THAT HAS PUT THE U.S. IN AN UNPRECEDENTED
POSITION, WHERE ALL PEOPLE OF THE WORLD VIEW ITS
POLICY WITH DISAPPROVAL, EVEN DISDAIN. WHAT
CREDIBILITY DOES BUSH HAVE WHEN HE SAYS NOT A WORD
ABOUT SHARON'S CRIMES IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES?"
GNEHM